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ABSTRACT

The speaker comments on a goal development process that has been used in the Milwaukee Public Schools for planning and implementing policy. Improvement of attendance was the goal selected for use in illustrating the model. (Author/IRT)

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# A ROUND TRIP TICKET FROM GOAL DEVELOPMENT TO BOARDROOM

A Presentation Prepared for the U.C.E.A.
Sponsored Session on Planning

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The capacity of the human mind for formulating and solving complex problems is very small compared with the size of the problems whose solution is required ...

Herbert A. Simon, Models of Man, 1957

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## INTRODUCTION

Goal setting is fundamental to institutional change and to the practice of government. In a real sense, the Constitution of the United States established the broad general political goals upon which the government of the United States has operated for over 200 years. In educational governance and in corporate business management a substantial literature encourages goal setting as a prerequisite for effective operation of an organization.

My purpose in this paper is to report a partial case study of a goal development process being used in the governance and the administration of the Milwaukee Public Schools. The title of the paper, "A Round Trip Ticket from Goal Development to Boardroom," discloses an analogue which I wish to use in explaining the approach we are taking.

One can easily imagine that to set goals is somewhat like embarking on a journey. For purposes of this trip, I wish to explore the method we used to present our recommendations to the Board of School Directors and to report the progress of the return trip from the Boardroom to the implementation platform of the school staffs and the middle management staff.

Since every journey needs a beginning, I chose the arrival of Superintendent Lee R. McMurrin in Milwaukee in July of 1975 as the point of departure. One of the many tasks that Dr. McMurrin began in his first few weeks was to provide leadership in establishment of a set of goals for the 1975-76 school year. The method selected was to probe the central administrative council members for those areas needing greatest attention. At first, a limited number of three to five goals was expected to be sufficient. But, as the deliberations proceeded, it became apparent that omission of important goals like reading instruction and mathematics instruction would be impossible. Therefore, the list grew quite lengthy and at one point it began to resemble a large catalogue. Eventually, the list was pared to ten goals and presented to the Board of School Directors on August 5, 1975 for their deliberation and adoption.

## TEN GOALS FOR 1975-1976

Copies of the goal recommendations to the Board of School Directors and the complete set of materials are provided as an addendum to this paper. The ten goals which were adopted are listed below:

### Management Goals *

1. To improve attendance levels in elementary and econdary public schools of Milwaukee during the 1975-76 school year over the 1974-75 school year.

2. To improve the reading achievement of all pupils in the Milwaukee Public Schools during the 1975-76 school year over the 1974-75 school year.

3. To improve the mathematics achievement of Milwaukee Public Schools pupils during the 1975-76 school year over the 1974-75 school year.

4. To increase the number of activities for school staffs, student groups, parents, and administrators, in the area of interpersonal relations.

5. To improve the record of placement in full time jobs and/or advanced education for all graduating seniors.

6. To take the planning steps necessary to establish a K-12 career education program and to test various pilot efforts toward the development of system-wide programs.

7. To provide effective and efficienc diagnostic and placement procedures and programs to meet the needs of handicapped children.

8. To improve fiscal planning and control in order to receive the best return for each educational dollar spent within local fiscal constraints and the state's cost control limitations.

9. To develop a plan for the inclusion of all staff members in various staff development programs.

10. To develop, operate, and maintain facilities and resources to provide developmental activity for children, youth, and adults through life time sports, cultural and social activities.

* All ten management goals represent priorities for the entire school system.

In addition to the ten goals, we recommended a six stage system of 1.) Statement of purpose or need, 2.) Statement of goal, 3.) Statement of objectives, 4.) Statement of activities, 5.) Plan of Evaluation, and 6.) Plan for Reporting. The

system is planned to be cyclical on an annual basis. A further benefit of the system was to set an expectation of commitment on the part of everyone to specific events which would be scheduled throughout the year.

## ATTENDANCE AS THE LAUNCH VEHICLE

For explanation purposes and for a full trial of the process in the first year we took one of the goals; namely, to improve attendance and accelerated development through the entire six phase cycle. Since goal development and implementation require changes in inertia, particularly in a large school system, we elected to concentrate a deliberately focused activity with respect to the attendance goal.

### Public Awareness

First, we began a public awareness campaign. This was in three phases; namely, (1) announcements in the newspapers, (2) by use of billboards and (3) by administrative communication to every principal that the goal was to be emphasized from the beginning of school. The public response was overwhelmingly favorable and large scale. Parents began calling to be certain about opening of school. They displayed a concern we had not experienced in years. One high school, which normally experiences a delay in reaching the peak fall enrollment until the first frost, had two hundred more children than expected on opening day. This extra enrollment was a problem for the principal and his staff. But as our superintendent Lee McMurrin described the response, "It is a pleasant kind of problem to have."

### Continuous Feedback

To provide continuous feedback on attendance, we computerized the monthly attendance reports for all schools and then summarized the school reports by levels for the city as a whole. The following table shows our progress between the first five months of 1974-75 and the first five months of 1975-76. It appears that the project is successful so far.

ATTENDANCE PERCENTAGES FOR 1974-75
COMPARED WITH 1975-76
MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

| Schools | September | | October | | November | | December | | January | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1974 | 1975 | 1974 | 1975 | 1974 | 1975 | 1974 | 1975 | 1975 | 1976 |
| Elementary | 95.5 | 94.8 | 93.5 | 94.8 | 93.3 | 93.0 | 92.7 | 92.6 | 90.5 | 90.9 |
| Jr. High | 90.1 | 91.4 | 87.1 | 89.5 | 87.5 | 87.7 | 86.4 | 86.9 | 84.2 | 86.2 |
| Senior High | 88.1 | 88.1 | 82.2 | 86.0 | 84.7 | 85.1 | 83.3 | 85.0 | 82.5 | 84.3 |
| Total for City | 92.6 | 92.4 | 90.6 | 91.3 | 89.1 | 89.8 | 88.4 | 89.4 | 87.1 | 88.3 |

Community and Staff Involvement

City-wide Conference. Total community and staff involvement with the schools is necessary. To sustain the initial wave of enthusiasm, we appointed one staff member to organize a city-wide conference on attendance. Dr. Nancy Noeske responded to the assignment creatively. She proposed an intensive ninety day schedule of pre-conference activities with a follow-up to come from the pre-conference and conference activities.

City-wide Task Forces. Dr. Noeske organized four city-wide task forces for two-way communications concerning the goal to improve attendance. The task forces were (1) business and industry, (2) government, (3) education, and (4) community action.

These four task forces were comprised of a broad spectrum of community leaders. The conference combined speeches by experts with over thirty small group workshop sessions.

Idea Bank. The ideas gleaned from the city-wide conference on attendance will be used by Dr. Noeske to establish an idea bank to serve as a permanent resource for school attendance teams.

School-Based Attendance Teams. As the school-based attendance teams began to be organized, we became aware that the clerical procedures would need to be minimal and to remain simple in order to facilitate the activities. We provided each school with a very simple format for planning and for goal setting at the school level. But we did not attempt to accumulate the goals, objectives and activities for each school centrally. Rather, we asked each administrative specialist in charge of a cluster of schools--usually a high school and the feeder schools--to review the development within each school to insure that the process of goal development was implemented. Technical assistance was also provided through central office staff.

One can imagine the potentially cumbersome procedures which would develop if a massive organization and paper flow accompanied each of the ten goal areas. We attempted to avoid undue burdens by requiring only essential activities at the appropriate level of management for only the decisions which needed to be made at that given level.

## THE REMAINING NINE GOALS

While this implementation process was being modeled with the one goal, we did not attempt to replicate the same level of activity for each of the other goals. Reading has a long history of programatic development, and we are in a much further advanced stage of improvement with this goal than with attendance. Development of the plans for other goals will be on a different schedule in that both human and material resources will not permit the same level of activity for each goal. We did not get into priorities directly, however.

## ADDITIONAL BOARD POLICY

One further parallel process is worth noting at this point. While we were implementing the attendance activities, we also determined a need to develop additional policy commitments at the Board level to support implementation of some of the other goals.

### Human Rights

We proposed a policy statement of human rights in order to facilitate our guarantees of delivery on human rights equally to all school children, parents and staff in Milwaukee Public Schools. Within this statement was an affirmative commitment to work toward an integrated society.

### Alternative Schools

In order to make a comprehensive plan for improving the quality of our educational program, Dr. McMurrin introduced an encompassing plan for school improvement.

High Schools Unlimited. At the senior high school level the plan was called High Schools Unlimited. Students would eventually be given the right to study courses of their own choosing at any high school in Milwaukee. Free transportation would be provided, and each high school would offer a unique capstone career specialty that no other high school in the city was able to offer.

Options for Learning. At the elementary level the plan was called Options for Learning. Each parent would be given an opportunity to participate in one of a number of special or alternative school programs depending on the desirable approach to learning and teaching valued by the parents.

School for the Transition. A third part of the comprehensive approach to education is at the junior high school or middle school level. Schools for the Transition is the title given to an approach which encourages exploration and builds on the choices made in elementary school. Several organizational patterns will be used and a number of special Schools for the Transition will be initiated. The transition concept recognizes the many rapid changes each young person makes during this period, and a heavy emphasis is to be placed on guidance and encouragement to seek out a wide variety of educational experiences.

The Board of School Directors subsequently adopted an alternative schools policy as a public commitment supporting implementation of this program.

## EXTERNAL INTERVENTION

### Desegregation Order

All institutions are subject to external events and interventions. Milwaukee Public Schools is no exception. On January 19, 1976, we received a desegregation order from the Eastern Wisconsin District Court of the United States. Our previous involvement and experience with goal development found us ready to move ahead with a positive program for September of 1976. We currently have before the Board of School Directors a first phase plan of the Alternative Schools policy and of the Human Rights policy.

Committee of 100 Proposed. We also have organized a significant community involvement program to involve thousands of citizens in the selection of a representative committee of 100 people to work on integration.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Advantages

What are the advantages of a goal development approach to school management?

First, I believe the approach permits an organization to collectively focus its thinking on a manageable set of alternatives.

Secondly, goals provide a stabilizing influence particularly in periods of rapid change and public questioning of purposes.

Thirdly, goals provide touchstones so that order may be maintained in debate and in public oratory. They help to set and to provide rulings about agendas, allocation of resources and commitments of time.

Fourthly, goals provide a basis upon which to establish and to maintain effectiveness within an organization. Through establishment of goals the expectations for outcomes become explicit. This is essential if large scale ambiguity is present with respect to social policy in areas such as integration and quality education.

Finally, goals can provide a process for democratically deriving precision with reference to administrative action.

### Disadvantages

Adopted goals do not, however, in and by themselves provide a better system of management or administration. They can, in fact, be used to quell initiative and to close the system to external creative or spontaneous progress.

### Synthesis

The key to realizing the value of goals is to establish and to maintain an atmosphere of importance and commitment to the attainment of the goals while keeping avenues open for assimilation of positive creative ideas not contained in the goal statements.

In our case, we think that we encourage new ideas both at the Board level and in the administrative organization.